

**Remarks to the Environmental Youth Award Winners***April 24, 2001*

Thank you all very much. It's my honor to be here. First, Christie Todd, you're doing a great job. I knew I was going to pick—I knew she was going to do a great job when I picked her. I didn't realize how good. And she really is—I'm proud to have her on my team.

I want to thank the parents who are here. I know it's a proud moment for you, and it should be. It means you've done your job.

I always like to remind folks who are lucky enough to have a child, the most important job you'll ever have is to love your children and to be a good mom and dad. I want to thank the sponsors who are here, and I look forward to thanking you all personally after this brief speech. *[Laughter]* Please don't break out in applause. *[Laughter]*

The Congress is back, and it's good to see three fine Members of the Congress here. I thank you guys for coming: Zach Wamp of Tennessee, Mark Kirk of Illinois, and Wally Herger of California. Thank you guys for being here. I know you're here to represent your constituents, and I know you're proud of your constituents, just like we are, as well.

But most particularly, I want to thank the winners. I had the opportunity of having my picture taken with the winners, and it looks like I might have a chance to have a few more after this is over. *[Laughter]* Right, guy? *[Laughter]*

For three decades now, the Environmental Protection Agency has helped to carry out our national commitment to the wise care of the environment. The agency has worked with many private citizens who understand that each have a duty to be good stewards of the land and life around us. And that's what we're honoring today.

Interesting thing is, is that we're honoring youngsters. You would think that the old folks would be the ones leading the charge in America and many places. But it's our young who are doing so, particularly when it comes to cleaning up the environment, and for that we're grateful. It really does speak to a great future for America, I think.

And rather than going through all the impressive accomplishments, just like Christie Todd did, I do want to talk a little bit about good environmental policy. It starts with a commitment. And my administration has a commitment to clean air and clean water and good soils.

Laura and I are fortunate enough to own a ranch in central Texas. I like to remind everybody that if you own your own land, every day is Earth Day. If you live off the land—the people who care more about that than the people who live off the land—the reason I bring that up is because I want—a good policy understands the proper role of the Federal Government. The proper role of the Federal Government is to set high standards, to set goals, but it's to work with local folks to achieve those goals.

Not all wisdom is in Washington, DC, as witnessed by what took place up here. All of us in Washington don't have all of the answers to all of the problems. Our job is to work in a collaborative way with people at the local level. As Christie Todd said, we'll fund more, and we will.

We've got money in our budget to fully fund the Land and Water Conservation Fund for the first time. It says we'll work with local folks to set aside lands that need to be protected. We've got money in our budgets to repair the national parks. Here, the Federal Government is talking about a clean world and a clean environment, and yet we're not even keeping our own parks; we're not fulfilling our own responsibilities. It seems like to me, if we want to set a good example for the rest of the country, we've got to take care of what we're—over which we're in charge. And we're going to do so at the Federal level.

We've got some regulatory policy in place that makes sense. But it says we're going to make decisions based upon sound science, not some environmental fad or what may sound good—that we're going to rely upon the best of evidence before we decide.

Ours is a policy that truly believes that technologies have advanced to the point where we can have economic growth and sound environmental policy go hand in hand. Oh, there's a lot of talk recently about energy. And for those of you in California, you know we need more energy. For those of

you who are living in the biggest State in our Union, who have suffered blackouts—and some of us think there may be more blackouts coming—we've got to come up with an energy policy for America. But I firmly believe we can do so and protect the environment.

The whole world doesn't have to be zero-sum. It doesn't have to be that we find more energy, and therefore, the environment suffers. You see, we've got technologies available now to make sure that we explore and protect the environment at the same time, and we need to do that. We need to be good stewards of the land.

But we've also got to understand, if we don't bring more natural gas to the markets, we're going to have blackouts. We've also got to understand, in order to power the power-generating plants that are now being built in California, we need more energy. And I want to assure the young up here that this is an administration committed to good, sound policy. And it's an administration that firmly believes that the technologies are developed to the point where we can be good stewards of the land and, at the same time, bring the energy to market that we need.

We'll base decisions on sound science. We'll call upon the best minds of America to help us achieve an objective, not only here at home but around the world, which is: cleaner air, cleaner water, and better use of our land.

It's such a wonderful inspiration to see the young of America standing up here who are setting a good example for all of us. And so, on behalf of our Government and the American people, I want to congratulate the winners, their parents, and their sponsors.

God bless you all, and God bless America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:15 p.m. in the State Dining Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Christine Todd Whitman.

### **Message Commemorating the Forced Exile and Annihilation of Armenians in the Ottoman Empire**

*April 24, 2001*

Today marks the commemoration of one of the great tragedies of history: the forced exile and annihilation of approximately 1.5 million Armenians in the closing years of the Ottoman Empire. These infamous killings darkened the 20th century and continue to haunt us to this day. Today, I join Armenian Americans and the Armenian community abroad to mourn the loss of so many innocent lives. I ask all Americans to reflect on these terrible events.

While we mourn the tragedy that scarred the history of the Armenian people, let us also celebrate their indomitable will which has allowed Armenian culture, religion, and identity to flourish through the ages. Let us mark this year the 1700th anniversary of the establishment of Christianity in Armenia. Let us celebrate the spirit that illuminated the pages of history in 451 when the Armenians refused to bow to Persian demands that they renounce their faith. The Armenian reply was both courageous and unequivocal: "From this faith none can shake us, neither angels, nor men, neither sword, fire or water, nor any bitter torturers." This is the spirit that survived again in the face of the bitter fate that befell so many Armenians at the end of the Ottoman Empire.

Today, that same spirit not only survives, but thrives in Armenian communities the world over. Many Armenian survivors and their descendants chose to live in the United States, where they found safety and built new lives. We are grateful for the countless ways in which Armenian Americans continue to enrich America's science, culture, commerce and, indeed, all aspects of our national life.

One of the most important ways in which we can honor the memory of Armenian victims of the past is to help modern Armenia build a secure and prosperous future. I am proud that the United States actively supports Armenia and its neighbors in finding